

is remembered by his family as a caring husband, father, and grandfather, and he will be deeply missed by his community that he helped build.

WE CAN PIVOT TOWARDS BIPARTISAN ACTION CONSISTENT WITH THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, this is really an amazing time on Capitol Hill. The Republican internal battles and inability to deliver a coherent, effective alternative to fulfill all their contradictory campaign promises on healthcare has done more than just expose their political and policy dysfunction. They are obviously flirting with a serious political backlash.

They have managed to make the Affordable Care Act, ObamaCare, with all of its shortcomings, popular with the majority of the American public for the first time ever, including so many small business people.

They made the public more aware and concerned about Medicaid, that has expanded and made such a difference in Kentucky, in Oregon, in States all across the country, providing care for people otherwise who had not had it.

They have managed to accelerate the move towards single payer by more than a decade: Medicare for all, Medicaid for more. I don't know the exact form, but we are going to be moving in that direction, and the Republicans have helped raise the awareness and accelerate that progress, but I hope that we are going to be able to take steps to make progress sooner.

In the meantime, I suspect that the Affordable Care Act, the core reforms and structure, are going to, in fact, stay in place. This is because there aren't the votes in the Senate to do anything more; and frankly, it doesn't look like there are votes to do much in the House, the so-called skinny bill notwithstanding.

But I hope that we can pivot towards modest, bipartisan actions that are consistent with the Affordable Care Act, but don't depend on it. We have a number of bipartisan initiatives that are teed up and ready to go.

I have worked for years with Congresswoman DIANE BLACK from Tennessee, on value-based insurance design. This bipartisan legislation would reward value over volume and make insurance much more effective in paying for what we need.

I have an initiative with Congressman JASON SMITH and with Senator TODD YOUNG dealing with kidney health. This would enable providers to leverage those weekly sessions for dialysis for some of our most vulnerable Americans in terms of their health. Dialysis costs 1 percent of the entire Federal budget. We should be able to use

that time and attention to deliver wraparound services, more care and less strain on people with multiple health needs.

We ought to be able to act on empowering our citizens and their families to know what they are facing at end of life. I have bipartisan legislation with my friend and colleague, Congressman ROE from Tennessee, along those lines.

Congress ought to accept the challenge from President Trump to deal meaningfully with prescription drug costs. There is support on both sides of the aisle. We can save billions of dollars for Americans and the taxpayers, and we can provide better care.

There are mental health initiatives with our friend TIM MURPHY. Bipartisan progress was made in the last Congress, but there is much more that needs to be done.

In fact, we can work together to overcome the opposition of Chairman SESSIONS and the Rules Committee denying the House the right to vote on extending our veterans access bill to allow consultation about medical marijuana. No one can listen to the heartbreaking stories of veterans and their families about what medical marijuana has done to sufferers of PTSD, chronic pain, traumatic brain injury. It is legal in 29 states, but the Rules Committee denied the right of the House to vote on extending that service to our veterans and their doctors, despite the horrible record that the VA has in preventing veteran suicide, and where the opioid addiction rate for the VA is twice the general population.

These are things we can do tomorrow, not dealing with denying millions of people care through the Affordable Care Act and the various permutations that are spinning around now.

Do our job, work together, follow regular order, deal with bipartisan initiatives that will benefit the American people, save the taxpayer money, and improve the health of all Americans.

TRIBUTE TO SARAH MEECE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. ROGERS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to my long-time adviser and expert caseworker, Sarah Meece, upon her much-deserved retirement after dedicating more than 40 years of service by my side. When I reflect upon Sarah's career, I stand in awe of her loyalty, her unwavering patience, her persistent advocacy, and undying compassion for those in need.

As Congressman, I have the duty and the privilege of assisting the people of southern and eastern Kentucky as they grapple with Federal agencies. At the heart of those cases has stood Sarah Meece providing expert advice and staunch support for individuals in our region who need help with Social Security, disability, and retirement claims, among many other issues. In fact, over

the last 36 years, Sarah has worked on approximately 150,000 cases, representing an unmatched record of assistance for more than 4,000 individuals each year.

Sarah has gained so much notoriety in her field that staff from other congressional offices, and officials even from the administration, contact her for guidance in case work. And in this line of work, there are very few, if any, medals or certificates of honor to honor those worthy of recognition like Sarah; nonetheless, her drive and consistency has never failed.

Day in and day out, Sarah has answered countless phone calls, set up personal meetings, listened to some of the most heartbreaking stories from families who were denied benefits on multiple occasions, those in desperate need of recouping benefits, others who lost hope in a mountain of Federal paperwork. Sarah's reward has been the simple words of appreciation from the thousands upon thousands of individuals who she has helped over the years. In my eyes, she deserves so much more.

While I wish Sarah the best in her years of retirement, the absence of her daily presence in the office will be insurmountable. When I was elected Commonwealth's Attorney for Pulaski and Rockcastle Counties in 1969, Sarah Meece was there. When I was the Republican nominee for Lieutenant Governor in 1979, Sarah Meece was there. When I was elected to Congress in 1980, Sarah Meece was there. In fact, she has been with me every day since, even volunteering her personal time for campaign work along the way, ensuring we both could continue serving the public for another 2 years.

During her tenure, Sarah welcomed U.S. Presidents and Vice Presidents to our region, befriended eight Kentucky Governors and their staffs, and assisted hundreds of local leaders across southern and eastern Kentucky as they navigated through Federal issues.

However, it is the people living in the hills and hollers of Kentucky's Fifth Congressional District who have driven her passion-filled public service. With every call and every personal visit, Sarah offered an encouraging word of hope to our constituents. Very few people can find the silver lining in every cloud like Sarah does, or bring a smile and a laugh to a broken heart. Her comical candor and illustrative storytelling have been a bright spot in everyone's day.

I am forever grateful to have such a great friend and loyal adviser over these last 4 decades. Sarah's life's work has given countless families hope in their darkest hour and comforted them through lengthy and complex Federal issues.

Simply put, Sarah is irreplaceable, both her institutional knowledge of Federal casework and her kind, enduring spirit.

Mr. Speaker, if every congressional office and Federal agency had a Sarah Meece, our Nation would operate much